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RECENT NORTH VIETNAMESE ACTIVITIES
BETWEEN THE 19TH AND 20TH PARALLELS

18 JUNE 1968

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
18 June 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Recent North Vietnamese Activities
Between the 19th and 20th Parallels

Summary

Both logistics and military activities south of the 20th Parallel increased sharply during the past week.

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Transport repair activities at Thanh Hoa reflect a consolidation of maintenance effort by abandoning redundant bypass facilities.

MIG activity south of the 20th Parallel was resumed on 13 June, for the first time since 23 May.

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A MIG-21 downed a US Navy F4 jet on 16 June. The main runway at Bai Thuong has been completely graded and is probably usable.

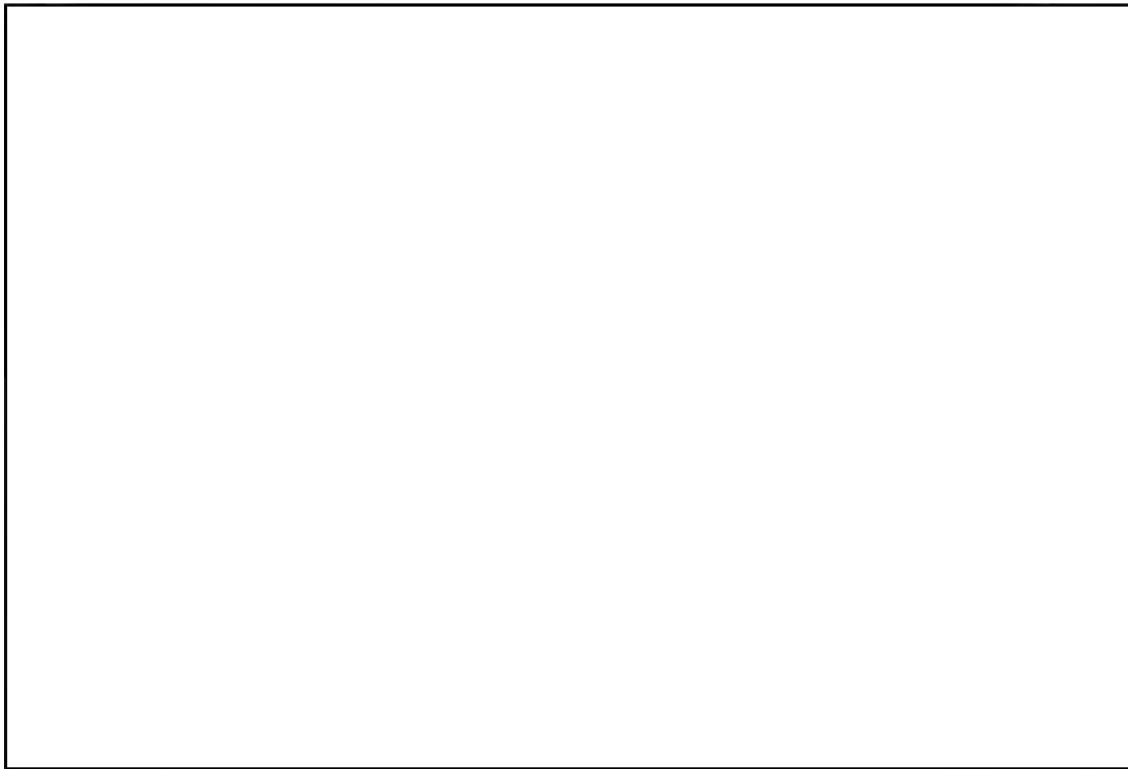
In an unprecedented action, North Vietnam reportedly deployed more than 20 MI-1 and MI-4 helicopters to the DMZ area. The purpose of this deployment is unclear, but it must be of high priority to risk almost the entire helicopter force.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared jointly by the Office of Economic Research and the Office of Current Intelligence and was coordinated with the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs.

The deployment may be related to new enemy ground force deployments in the eastern DMZ area or to high-priority supply deliveries in areas of localized shortages. US forces reported destroying as many as ten of the enemy helicopters in subsequent actions.

Logistic Activity

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2. [redacted]
[redacted] About 390 pieces of rolling stock, consisting of both regular meter-gauge and tram-type meter-gauge cars, were noted in the immediate area of Thanh Hoa, compared with the previous high of 220 observed in January 1968. Extensive transshipping of material from the meter-gauge railcars into smaller tram or lorry cars was observed in the rail yard. In addition, considerable open storage of goods was sighted alongside the rail line, possibly indicating that goods are quickly being moved through the area.

3. The North Vietnamese are apparently consolidating their maintenance effort at key crossings along the lines of communication. [redacted]

[redacted] two of the seven bypasses for the Thanh Hoa Bridge have apparently been abandoned. The bridge located just south of the 20th Parallel, although repeatedly bombed, has never been dropped. The two abandoned crossings are rail ferries that are probably not needed to handle traffic. The North Vietnamese apparently are concentrating their maintenance effort on the remaining bypasses, consisting of two pontoon bridges, two rail ferries, and a combination highway ferry/floating bridge.

Air Operations

4. North Vietnamese air activity south of the 20th Parallel has picked up sharply in the past few days. [redacted]

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[redacted] Several engagements with US aircraft have occurred, and one Navy F4 jet was downed by a missile from a MIG-21 on 16 June.

5. For the first time the North Vietnamese are reported to be using helicopters in some kind of combat support role at the eastern end of the DMZ (see the map). Allied forces reported more than 20 Communist helicopters in that area on the weekend of 15-16 June. All of the helicopter activity apparently was occurring north of or in the DMZ. Some of the helicopters reportedly were engaged in north-south supply flights; others were conducting shuttle flights to Tiger Island just off the coast. Allied forces reported destroying as many as ten of the enemy helicopters in subsequent actions.

6. The North Vietnamese have been credited with an inventory of 17 MI-1 and MI-4 helicopters which were believed stationed at various airfields and dispersal areas primarily in the Hanoi/Haiphong areas.* The MI-1 was the first modern helicopter

* The North Vietnamese inventory also includes 4 MI-6 helicopters that are not believed to have participated in these activities.

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developed by the USSR and has a normal payload of only 355 pounds. The MI-4 is a 1.5-ton payload transport/cargo helicopter. There is no information on when or how the helicopters moved south to the DMZ area.

7. This is the first time that North Vietnamese helicopters have been known to operate so far south. During and shortly after the Communist Tet offensive, single-engine and twin-engine transports, some of them armed with rockets and bombs, made several sorties into the western DMZ area. Some of these flights were presumed to have involved movement of high-priority cargo and/or top-ranking personnel. It is not clear what sort of operation is now under way, but it must have a high priority for Hanoi to risk almost its entire helicopter force. The commitment of this force could be related to new enemy ground force deployments in the eastern DMZ area or to a need to make high-priority supply deliveries in areas of localized shortages.

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In addition, one MIG-17 and two MIG-21's were seen parked in revetments at one end of the link taxiway. It is probable, therefore, that the North Vietnamese are no longer using the sod strip which parallels the main runway. If they decide to pave the entire main runway

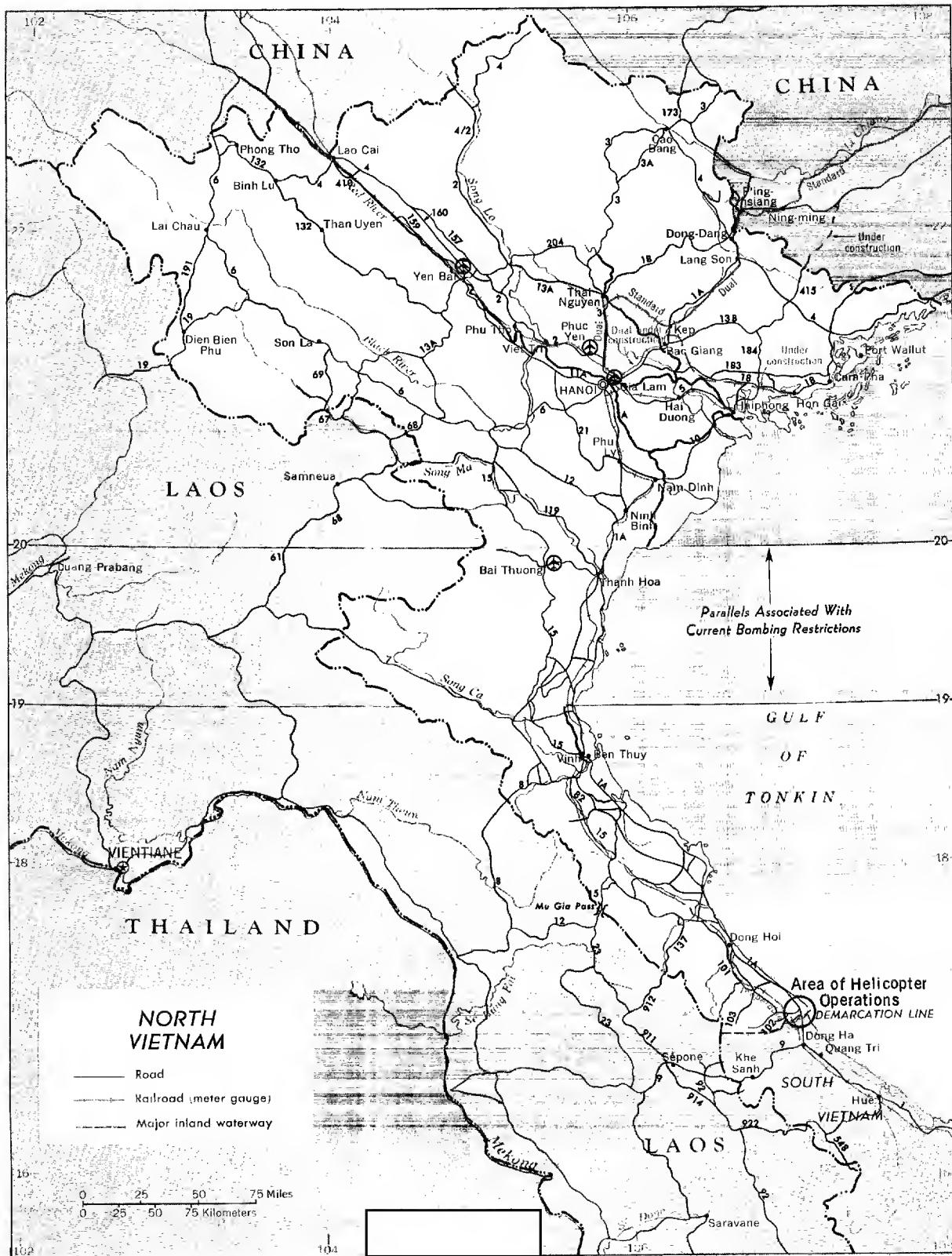
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with concrete or asphalt, however, the North Vietnamese probably will use the sod strip while work is in progress.

Vinh

10. [redacted] indicates that the Vinh Airfield was still unusable. Nine craters appeared to be under repair on the northern portion of the runway. When work is completed, approximately 4,000 feet of landing area will be serviceable.



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